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SUBJECT: A/SYG MULET BRIEFS COUNCIL ON DARFUR VIOLENCE

¶1. (SBU) Summary: On request of the United States, A/SYG Mulet provided the Security Council a detailed factual chronology of events in Darfur beginning with the January 10 movement of JEM forces into South Darfur and the ensuing aerial bombardment by the Government of Sudan. He said that, although the peace process continues "at a very rudimentary state, these events are undoubtedly a setback." France, in its capacity as Council President, orally briefed the press afterwards, condemning the escalation of violence, calling on all parties to cease hostilities and engage in an inclusive political process, strongly supporting UN/AU mediator Bassole and UNAMID, and expressing an intent to follow closely the situation on the ground in Darfur in the upcoming weeks. Members expressed opinions in line with their well-known positions. End Summary.

Mulet Briefs the Council  
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¶2. (SBU) The Assistant Secretary General for the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, Edmond Mulet, briefed the Council on January 28 on recent fighting in Darfur. Mulet noted that the cycle of violence began on January 10, when Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) forces amassed in South Darfur, close to Muhajeriya. Mulet stated that UNAMID confirmed that the GOS bombed Khor Abeche that evening, and two days later bombed Muhajeriya. Mulet also pointed out that the GOS accepted responsibility for the bombing and stressed that its objective was to target JEM forces. Mulet said that UNAMID had confirmed GOS bombing raids in Muhajeriya from January 22 to 24, which led to an estimated 1,000 civilians taking refuge at a UNAMID camp.

¶3. (SBU) Mulet described rebel movements outside the Muhajeriya area as well, noting that JEM vehicles were seen on January 18 patrolling areas east and south of Nyala, in Labado and Geraida. Mulet said that the GOS informed UNAMID of its decision to deploy forces to Geraida, allegedly at the request of the rebel group Sudan Liberation Army/Minni Minawi (SLA-MM). On January 22, Mulet noted, fighting between the GOS and SLA/MM broke out, and the GOS took control of Geraida, claiming a JEM attack was imminent. Mulet said that UNAMID had received unconfirmed reports that the GOS conducted aerial bombardments in North Darfur in areas west of Haskanita and south of Um Kadada and will investigate this incident.

¶4. (SBU) Mulet further noted that on January 26, the GOS advised UNAMID that a column of 100 JEM vehicles was 17 kilometers outside El Fasher, approaching the city center, and that the GOS would respond through a ground and air offensive targeting rebel positions. Mulet said that the GOS closed El Fasher airport for the day, but noted that the airport has subsequently reopened. Mulet closed his briefing by characterizing these developments as an extremely worrying trend, signaling an investment in conflict rather than a commitment to peaceful negotiations.

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15. (SBU) Ambassador DiCarlo noted that the U.S. requested the briefing in order to have an accurate report from the UN on recent attacks that have been widely reported in the media. DiCarlo expressed extreme concern with both the GOS bombing campaign and the incursion of JEM into areas controlled by SLM/MM in South Darfur, which precipitated the upsurge in violence. She noted that the bombing campaign was in violation of existing Council resolutions and stressed that the Council must closely watch events in Darfur in the coming weeks. The UK called upon parties to cease hostilities and called for an effective monitoring mechanism in light of the increasing violence. France said that, while the context for recent violence in Darfur may be the impending International Criminal Court (ICC) decision, ICC action must not be a pretext for such violence. France reiterated its prior position that impunity cannot be tolerated and urged the Council to remain vigilant and to present a unified message to all parties.

16. (SBU) Russia stressed that the GOS had responded to armed provocation, and urged member states with influence over rebel groups to increase pressure on the rebels to engage with Bassole. Russia requested an update from Mulet regarding the Qatar initiative. Russia also discussed its appointment of a Special Envoy for Darfur, and noted that as the ICC prepares to issue a verdict, the Council must carefully follow events in Darfur. China characterized the escalation of hostilities as entirely the responsibility of JEM, a group that China said had refused to participate in the peace process and deliberately provoked a signatory to

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the Darfur Peace Agreement. China also noted that any action taken by the ICC should not be allowed to have an impact on the worsening situation in Darfur, and urged the Council to make greater efforts to support the peace process.

New Council Members Weigh In  
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17. (SBU) Both Uganda and Japan expressed appreciation for the U.S. initiative in seeking a briefing. Japan accused JEM of starting the "cycle of violence," acknowledged broad areas of agreement among Council members and urged the President to make a statement to the press on these elements. Both Mexico and Austria flagged the Panel of Experts' (POE) inability to travel to Sudan due to the GOS refusal to issue a visa to its expert on weapons evaluation.

Other Member Views  
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18. (SBU) Libya stated that the GOS has a sovereign right to protect its civilians and asserted that JEM is trying to seize control of the entire country. Libya characterized GOS efforts as stabilizing, with aerial bombardment a necessary tool to avoid JEM's efforts to destabilize the region. Burkina Faso, Vietnam, Croatia, and Costa Rica made general statements deploring the violence and urging all parties to commit to peaceful settlement.

Conclusion  
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19. (SBU) Mulet responded to Russia's question concerning the Qatar initiative by noting that Bassole had nearly finalized a framework agreement which would establish a detailed approach to political negotiations. Mulet urged members to strongly support Bassole. The Council engaged in brief debate over the press elements. Austria pushed to add a point on the POE visa issue. China, Libya and Russia opposed this addition. After Russia agreed to engage bilaterally with the GOS on the issue, Austria withdrew its request, urging all member states to press the GOS to issue the visa.

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